

February 7, 2007

Senate Local Government Committee
Montana State Legislature

RE: Senate Bill No. 201

Dear Committee Members:

I am writing to urge your support of Senate Bill No. 201. I write to you as a professional land-use planner with years of experience as a general land-use planner, as a director of a county planning department and now as a planner employed in the private sector, all in the State of Montana.

The legislation before you would be an important step in recognizing that local jurisdictions do not have to rely solely upon regulatory methods for conducting wise land-use planning. It has long been understood by those in land-use planning and the development community that regulations will not in themselves guide growth in the most desirable areas. Market incentives such as understanding where city/county infrastructure will be provided, expedited subdivision review and reduced fees are sorely needed, particularly in the high growth areas of the state. While this can be achieved under the current statute, SB 201 clearly provides the framework and codifies the requirements.

The two biggest complaints that I have heard consistently over the years from not only the development community but also the general public are that there is no predictability in the subdivision review process and there is no incentive to develop where it is most desired by the public and the local jurisdictions. To

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effectively guide new development it is important to provide both predictability and incentives to all parties involved in the process.

Local governments should stop relying upon the site by site subdivision review and begin to establish clear standards through planning and zoning. This legislation is a good step toward providing predictability to all of those affected by future development including developers, neighbors, landowners, local officials, and the public.

In Lewis and Clark County a "working group" comprised of individuals from diverse backgrounds and interests has been working toward achieving the intent of this legislation under the existing statute. The working group is trying to draft zoning regulations that provide for the incentives necessary to encourage growth along the northern boundary of the City of Helena, while ensuring that the criteria for local jurisdictional review are met, particularly the impacts defined in 76-3-608(3)(a).

In conclusion, SB 201 clearly provides the framework and codifies the requirements necessary to provide the predictability and incentives for guiding growth. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Jerry Grebenc

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